

McCall, Samuel W. (Samuel Walker)

THE PHILIPPINE TARIFF BILL.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. SAMUEL W. McCALL
OF MASSACHUSETTS,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

January 12, 1906.

WASHINGTON.
1906.

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SPEECH
OF
HON. SAMUEL W. McCALL.

The House being in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and having under consideration the bill (H. R. 3) to amend an act entitled "An act temporarily to provide revenue for the Philippine Islands, and for other purposes," approved March 8, 1902—

Mr. McCALL said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The objections to the policy of free trade with the Philippine Islands could easily have been foreseen before those islands were annexed to the United States. The policy involved in this bill is no surprise to the country. It was ordained seven years ago, when the treaty of Paris was ratified, and unless we are to suppose that the American people should prove false to the fundamental principle of their political gospel, which was in existence before they were and which they had religiously observed until that time, it was inevitable that sooner or later we should have free trade with the Philippine Islands. I do not have any sympathy with those gentlemen who were the original advocates of annexation and who are now viewing with alarm the threatened destruction of American industries. I think they should manfully recognize that they are simply going to pay the price for having indulged in some beautiful rhetoric about the flag, how it should never be hauled down no matter for what purpose it had been run up, and also for the pleasure of standing upon the mount of prophecy and seeing dazzling visions of an illimitable trade destined never to exist. They are paying the penalty to-day for having contributed toward making the Philippine Islands American territory.

My friend from Pennsylvania [Mr. DALZELL], who is one of the most genuine orators I have ever listened to upon this floor, in a burst of piety and eloquence yesterday credited the providence of God with the responsibility or the glory for our possession of the Philippine Archipelago. This observation of my friend reminded me of a remark credited to Mr. Henry Labouchere concerning a celebrated British statesman. He did not find fault, Mr. Labouchere said, that that statesman should now and then be found with an ace up his sleeve, but he did object when he claimed that it was put there by Divine Providence. [Laughter.] Horace, in his Art of Poetry, has said that you should not introduce a deity upon the scene unless there were some very hard knot to untie, which it would require a deity to do, and it seems to me gentlemen who have defended our Philippine policy here have acted strictly within the rule

laid down by Horace. They have a hard knot to untie, and they have frequently introduced Providence into this debate. It is a convenient refuge to fly to when one is hard pressed for argument.

The policy of free trade was established, to my mind, when we annexed the Philippine Islands, and my action was determined for me by others in spite of my opposition when annexation was decreed, and I feel constrained to support free trade as a necessary result of annexation. It was ordained when we bought from Spain the bloodiest foreign war in which this Republic ever engaged. I say foreign war, because those people never owed us any allegiance whatever, and the war was purely one of conquest and subjugation. It was a war aptly characterized by the fine line cited by Mr. Mead:

Cursed is the war no poet sings.

Imagine, if you can, an American poet singing and the American schoolboy declaiming the most glorious exploit of that war, the capture of the Philippine chieftain by American soldiers in Philippine uniforms at the very moment when he was extending to them succor from impending starvation.

The bill before the House illustrates, to my mind, one of the inherent vices of our Philippine policy. Whom do we represent here to-day? The Secretary of War was in doubt whether he primarily represented the people of the Philippines or the people of this country. A great banker may at the same moment of time—because it has been done—represent an insurance company which buys and the banking firm which sells securities. [Laughter.] Another Napoleon of finance at the head of an insurance company may in his wisdom and benevolence disburse the trust funds in his hands for the conversion of the political heathen in the United States. [Laughter.]

But we are sitting under peculiar sanction. We are the trustees of the American people and can have no divided allegiance. We are bound strictly to the duty that we owe our people. It is hardly for us to indulge in self-congratulation over our benevolence. In the first place, it is a purely obtrusive benevolence. The Filipino people have not asked for it. We have forced it upon them at the cannon's mouth. In the next place, we are not a missionary society, but the chosen servants of the American people, and to my mind it appears hypocritical self-palaver and repugnant to all sound notions of official responsibility for us to congratulate ourselves, when we are using powers we hold in trust, on the benevolence we are showing the people of the Philippine Islands.

Who represents the people of those islands to-day? Suppose that they had the power that we have, and were making tax laws to-day for both themselves and for us. I am not saying what they might think best to give us in their benevolence, but some might think it well for them to have peculiar trade relations with the great group of nations which nature had given them as neighbors. Has that fact any consideration to-day? When one attempts to represent both sides in a trade, he is not apt adequately to represent either.

I believe that when the Philippine Islands became American territory they were entitled to that uniformity of duties prescribed by the Constitution, and it was their constitutional right

to trade with other portions of American territory. I know the Supreme Court has decided differently from that by a majority of one in the Porto Rico case. There were two cases decided in one day, involving two apparently contradictory positions. There were two groups of four justices, and one justice rendered the opinion of the court in one case and then he joined the other group of four justices and rendered the opinion in that case. One of the other justices, who upheld the constitutionality of that act, said the two positions were absolutely irreconcilable. The circumstances of a decision have very much to do with the weight that it receives with a member of the political department of the Government bound by his own oath to defend the Constitution. Four of the justices, notwithstanding that decision in the Porto Rico case, in a subsequent case decided still that that policy was unconstitutional. Now, if the decision of the court does not bind even the justices themselves—and how could a decision ever be reversed if it did bind them—how can it be said to bind Members of Congress, members of a coordinate branch of the Government?

The Supreme Court, for instance, has decided that an income tax is not constitutional. Suppose a proposition for an income tax were submitted to this House, would any Member on the other side be able to vote for that tax in the face of the decision of the court? In that view of it the income-tax question was settled by a majority opinion for all time.

I believe that the policy of taxation against people inhabiting American territory is not only contrary to our Constitution, but if we had only an unwritten constitution it would be contrary to the very genius of our institutions. That was the position I took in the Porto Rican case when I opposed the passage of that bill.

But if I did not feel impelled, Mr. Chairman, to vote in favor of free trade with the Philippine Islands, upon the high political grounds I have referred to, I confess as a purely economic question I should hesitate to vote for this bill. I am for judicious revision of the tariff, but I am not in favor of a change of tariff by grafting upon our body politic tropical parasites which may absorb the vital forces of the American commonwealth. [Applause.] I am unable to see—speaking now from a purely economic standpoint—I am unable to see any economic ground that would support free trade with the Philippine Islands that would not more strongly support free trade with almost any other portion of the earth's surface.

They are at the antipodes, and are not more remote in distance than are their civilization and their social system different from our own. In their standard of living, their scale of wages, their climate, and their soil they differ almost as radically from us as do any people upon the globe. It is said they can not raise sugar in competition with our American farmers because their methods of production are antiquated and their sugar low grade, and the soil adapted to the raising of it very limited in amount. But suppose some American with skill and capital, like Mr. Atkins, the great Cuban sugar planter, should go there, or suppose that Germans or Englishmen should go there with modern machinery, and equip mills and raise sugar as they raise it in Cuba, do you fancy we should have on our hands simply the question of sun-dried sugar made with carabaos? We should

have 96° sugar, and, in my opinion, be likely to have sugar made there as cheaply as in Cuba.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania said: "Why, the American capitalist will not go to such a remote place as the Philippine Islands; he will choose territory where there are railroads and schools and facilities for business," but I say to you, gentlemen, the American capitalist is emphatically a pioneer. He loves to plant his money in a mine upon a distant mountain side; he loves to go into an empty territory and to places remote from civilization, in the hope that some time his own will return to him a hundredfold. The Philippine Islands with free trade is the very spot that the American capitalist would seek.

Take the Sandwich Islands. I think we are likely to have reproduced the same condition that we had after we made the treaty with those islands. I have heard it said in debate on this floor that before the making of the treaty the Sandwich Islands were producing only about 11,000 tons of sugar a year, and I have also heard it said upon good authority that it was urged at that time that the limit of their production was about 70,000 tons, and yet this last year I believe they produced 400,000 tons. Suppose we have three-quarters of a million acres of the 70,000,000 acres in the Philippines devoted to sugar culture. If, as Governor Taft said, the Philippine Islands have more arable land, more rich soil, than Japan, with her 50,000,000 of people; if, as Governor Wright said, the Philippine soil will raise more sugar to the acre than that of the Sandwich Islands; if, as our officers in their reports have repeatedly said, the Filipino laborer is superior to the Chinese laborer, it seems to me that we are willfully closing our eyes and we are making ourselves the victims of a self-delusion if we do not see that we are perhaps sounding the knell of the sugar industry in this country.

In my opinion, the present sugar duty might have been made somewhat lower than it is, but I believe there should have been a very substantial duty. I believe that the effect of that duty has been to stimulate the production of sugar in this country, and if the farmers could be assured that it would be stable we should see still greater quantities produced here, and ultimately a lowering of the price. It is a great thing for the farmer, because it aids in diversifying agriculture and giving him a new profitable crop, and in justice we should remember that the farmer has been compelled to bear the brunt of the burden of the policy of protection. [Applause on the Democratic side.] So I say, Mr. Chairman, and I wish to state this case precisely as it appears to my mind, if I felt free to treat this question purely as an economic question and if I did not feel impelled by the views I have upon the constitutional and great underlying political questions, I should vote against this bill. The farmer is paying the penalty because some of our statesmen at a critical time in the history of the nation saw fit to "think imperially."

Now, that is all that I intended to say upon this bill, but certain allusions to the Commonwealth that I have the honor to represent in part lead me to add a few words more. I shall indulge in no eulogy, because I do not wish to offend some sensitive gentlemen who in this debate have alluded to her with perhaps something approaching asperity. My friend the distinguished

gentleman from Ohio [Mr. GROSVENOR], as I understand it, said that Massachusetts had been brought up by hand from infancy upon the pap of protection, and this taunt was echoed by the leader of the minority. Well, Mr. Chairman, if she was brought up by hand upon that diet she was brought up by a more powerful hand than hers, because she was torn by force from the breast of her natural mother, which is the sea. I think I shall not be accused of exaggeration when I say that Massachusetts in a far higher degree than any of her sister colonies inherited that instinct which made the mother country the mistress of the ocean.

She went into commerce and grew rich, and after the war of 1812, when she sat among the ruins of her commerce, destroyed by embargoes and by war, with a sublime patience and courage went to work to build it up again, and then a new obstacle was thrust between her and the sea in the shape of high tariff duties imposed in spite of and against the protest and votes of her Representatives, and imposed upon her by the Representatives from the South and the West. Is she to be sneered at to-day because she gracefully acquiesced in that policy forced upon her—acquiesced as she always has in any decreed policy of this nation? And so she embarked in manufacture, and, under this system of protection if you will, but largely by her thrift and the skill of her mechanics and the happy genius of her people, she became rich, although she is not to-day, relatively to the rest of the country, so preeminent in wealth as she was when this policy was adopted.

And she has not lagged behind the other States, I think you will pardon me for saying, in other respects. She has contributed to education, to art, to literature, to the prevention of grinding up the souls of young children in workshops, and to those other noble things which, far more than your wealth and your wars and your crusades undertaken to force "education" upon reluctant peoples at the point of the bayonet, will tell for your real and abiding glory. [Applause.]

What is her fault to-day? It is that under her system of untrammelled freedom of speech and of public discussion a great and increasing number of her people have dared to think and to say that the whirling changes of the nine years that have elapsed since the passage of the Dingley Act have thrown some of those great schedules out of gear with existing conditions, and that some duties, just, or at least harmless at the time they were enacted, have, by reason of industrial combination to stifle internal competition, and from other reasons, become exorbitant, and instead of protecting the people they are shielding monopoly and aiding it to pick the pockets of the people. [Applause.]

And they are somewhat weary of seeing that ancient friend of ours paraded upon ceremonial occasions, namely, "If the tariff is to be revised, let it be revised by its friends." If the tariff can ever be revised by its friends, can it not be revised by a Congress two-thirds of whose members in both the Senate and the House are Republicans? [Applause.]

I think that our noble governor never said a truer word—that a truer word never was spoken—than when he said that upon a "stand-pat platform" last fall the State would have been lost to the Republicans.



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Now, the people of Massachusetts are only thinking a little in advance of some of the people—not all of the other people—of this country. Soon this idea will invade New York and Illinois and Ohio, gathering force as it moves; and I say to you that if we do not treat protection as a rational principle instead of a cast-iron, immutable set of schedules, we are liable to have the Democratic party, and then possibly the deluge. [Laughter and applause on the Republican side.]

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